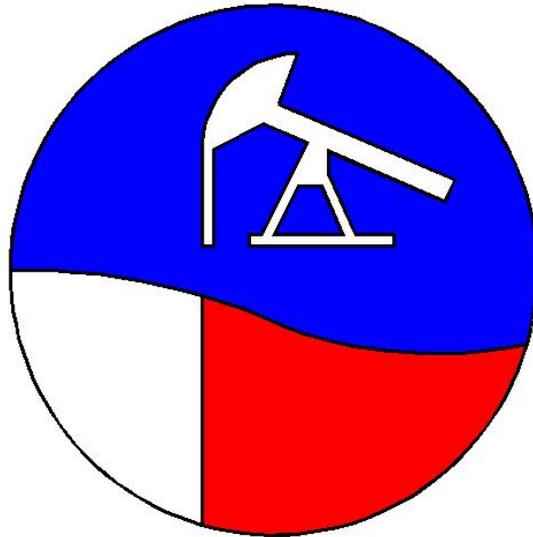


# **ECTOR COUNTY, TEXAS**



# **SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY**

**Adopted by  
Ector County Commissioners Court**

**November 24, 2014**

# **ECTOR COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA USE POLICY**

Ector County (the County) is interested in enhancing its traditional communications methods through the use of social media. The use of social media presents opportunity and risk to the County and individual County departments. In general, the County supports the use of social media to further County and departmental missions and goals. The County endorses the secure use of social media technology to enhance communication, collaboration and information exchange; streamline processes; and foster productivity improvements.

However, use of social media must not compromise data confidentiality and integrity. The same standards of conduct, principles and guidelines that apply to Ector County employees in the performance of their assigned duties apply to employee social media technology use. This document establishes countywide social media use policies, protocols and procedures intended to mitigate associated risks from use of this technology where possible.

Departmental use of social media technology shall conform to the policies, protocols and procedures contained or referenced, herein.

## **I. DEFINITIONS:**

- A. Social Media – The U.S. Government defines social media as the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation. Through social media, individuals or groups can create, organize, edit or comment on, combine, and share content. Social media uses many technologies and forms, including social-networking, blogs, wikis, photo-sharing, video-sharing, podcast, social bookmarking, mash-ups, widgets, virtual worlds, microblogs, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) and more. Not all forms of social media may be appropriate for use by County departments.
- B. Official County Email Account – Email account provided by a department mail system or approved external mailbox that is used for official County business.
- C. Approved County Social Media Site – Approved County social networking site refers to social networks that the Information Technology Department has assessed and approved for use by County departments.
- D. Post – An administrator submitted message/blog in the form of, but may not be limited to, text, videos, photographs, graphics, links (hyperlinks), documents, computer applications, etc.

- E. Comment – A user submitted response from an employee or member of the public to an administrator post. County employees should refer to the Ector County employee policies on internet and social media usage prior to the use of County or private social media.
- F. County Website – Ector County has a County website at [www.co.ector.tx.us](http://www.co.ector.tx.us). This is a primary source of information to the public on the internet and all social media pages should refer back to this website and any departmental page websites for further information about Ector County.

## **II. RESPONSIBILITY:**

- A. Department Head/Elected Official – Within the terms of this Policy, Department Heads and Elected Officials have authority to determine and establish social media activity at the department program level if that department has an approved social media site.
- B. Social Media Administrator – The Social Media Administrator is appointed by the Department Head/Elected Official, or his/her designee, with authority to use social media on behalf of the department and responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of content.

## **III. PROCEDURES:**

- A. County Social Media Use – Departmental use of social media shall conform to the policies, protocols and procedures contained, or referenced, herein.
  - 1) Comply with all applicable federal, state and county laws, regulations and policies. This includes adherence to, but may not be limited to, established laws and policies regarding copyright, records retention, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), First Amendment, Americans with Disabilities Act Amended Act (ADAAA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), privacy laws, employment-related laws, plus County established Administrative Rules and Regulations.
  - 2) Be familiar and carry out social media activity in accordance with the Ector County Social Media Use Policy.
- B. Requirements for Departments Using Social Media – Departments who choose to use social media shall:

- 1) Establish a well-thought-out social media workplan that complements county-wide policies and considers the department's mission and goals, audience, legal risks, technical capabilities, security issues, emergency response procedures, etc. The workplan shall be submitted to the IT Department for compliance review.
  - 2) Designate a Social Media Administrator responsible for overseeing the department's social media activity, policy compliance, and security protection.
- C. Authorized Use – Department Heads/Elected Officials, or designees, are responsible for designating appropriate levels of use.
- 1) Social media network usage shall be limited only to those with a clear business purpose to use the forum and have received training against phishing and social engineering attacks.
  - 2) Appropriate usage levels include identifying what sites the individual is approved to use, as well as defining capability: publish, edit, comment or view only.
  - 3) Only official spokespersons, such as Social Media Administrators and Department Head/Elected Official designee, shall be considered authorized users and have permission to post and respond.
  - 4) Authorized users shall review the County's social media policies and procedures and are required to acknowledge their understanding and acceptance of their scope of responsibility via signing an acknowledgement form and forwarding to the IT Department. Only those who have signed and submitted the Scope of Responsibility Form will be designated Authorized Users on behalf of the County.
- D. Use Behavior – The same standards, principles and guidelines that apply to Ector County employees in the performance of their assigned duties apply to employee social media use.
- 1) Authorized users shall do so only within the scope defined by their respective department per *Authorized Use*, above, and in compliance with all County policies, practices and user agreements and guidelines.

- 2) Authorized social media spokespersons shall not participate in social networking discussions related to County business matters in off-County time.
  - 3) Violations of this Policy shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and may result in appropriate disciplinary actions, up to and including, dissolution of social media site.
- E. Approved Social Media Sites – Departments shall only utilize County-approved social media networks for hosting official County social media sites.
- 1) New social media networks under consideration will be reviewed and approved by the IT Department, with consultation from the County Attorney and Human Resources, when appropriate.
  - 2) For each approved social media network, usage standards will be developed to optimize government use of the site.
  - 3) Departments may request review and approval of additional social media networks to the IT Department, as needed.
- F. Authenticity Establishment – County departmental social media sites shall be created and maintained with identifiable characteristics of an official County site that distinguishes them from non-professional or personal uses.
- 1) County social media network accounts shall be created using an official County email account.
  - 2) Contact information should display an official County email address, include a statement that the site is an “official account”, and provide a link to the County or departmental website.
  - 3) The name “Ector County” or the official County or departmental logo must be displayed.
- G. Site Content – Departments are responsible for establishing and maintaining content posted to their social media sites.
- 1) Social Media Administrators shall review site activity daily for exploitation or misuse.

- 2) IT shall provide periodic oversight of site activity for exploitation and misuse.
- 3) Social media content shall fully comply with all of the County's Personnel Management Regulations and Policies.
- 4) Contents posted on County social media sites may be considered public records subject to disclosure. Public records requests for the production of posts on a County social media site shall be referred to the County Attorney or designated Counsel for review and response.
- 5) The following forms of content posted by external and authorized users may be subject to removal if they contain:
  - i. Profane language or content;
  - ii. Content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination or harassment of protected classes;
  - iii. Sexual harassment content;
  - iv. Solicitations of commerce or advertisements, including promotion or endorsement;
  - v. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
  - vi. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems;
  - vii. Content intended to defame any person, group or organization;
  - viii. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party, such as trademark or copyright infringement;
  - ix. Making or publishing of false, vicious or malicious statements concerning any employee, the County or its operations;
  - x. Violent or threatening content;
  - xi. Disclosure of information that is confidential under the Public Information Act.
- 6) Unacceptable content and repeat individual violators shall be removed. The County Attorney or designated Counsel shall be contacted on any legal issues.
- 7) Departments shall work with the IT Department to have preventative measures in place against potential destructive technical incidents.

H. Records Management – Departmental use of social media shall be documented and maintained in an easily accessible format that tracks account information.

- 1) Departments are responsible for the creation, administration and deactivation of social media accounts.
  - 2) All content is to be fully accessible to any person requesting documents from the social media site.
  - 3) Content deemed inappropriate or technically destructive, as defined in the Policy, shall be promptly documented (screenshot/printout), saved pursuant to County policies and procedures regarding record retention, and then be removed immediately. The County Attorney or designated Counsel shall be contacted on any legal issues.
  - 4) Individuals (e.g. friends, fans or followers) who continue to post inappropriate content shall be removed.
- I. Network Security – Departments shall have security controls in place to protect County information and technology assets against potential destructive technical incidents.
- 1) Perceived or known compromises to the County’s internal networks shall be promptly reported to the IT Department.
  - 2) Computers, laptops and mobile devices used to administer County social media sites shall have up-to-date software to protect against destructive technical incidents, including but may not be limited to, cyber, virus and spyware/adware attacks.

**IV. ECTOR COUNTY EMPLOYEES NON-DESIGNATED AS SOCIAL MEDIA ADMINISTRATORS PARTICIPATING IN COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA SITES:**

- A. All applicable Ector County policies governing employee conduct and communications apply to employees who choose to make comments on County social media sites. Any violations may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including, termination of employment.
- B. If commenting on County business, employees should use a disclaimer which establishes that their comments represent their own opinions and do not represent those of Ector County, unless the employee has been authorized to make a comment on behalf of Ector County.
- C. These policies apply to employee comments made on or off County time. Any authorized employee comments must be made on Ector County time.

**V. ECTOR COUNTY EMPLOYEES PARTICIPATING IN NON-COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA SITES:**

- A. Employee use of non-County social media sites on County time is not permitted unless for County business necessity and the access has been specifically approved. Please refer to the Ector County Acceptable Internet Use Policy.
- B. Employees may use their own non-County social media sites at their own discretion on non-County time. However, the following policies apply to County employees using social media during their personal time:
- 1) Employees may not discriminate against or harass other Ector County employees.
  - 2) Employees may not attribute personal statements or opinions to Ector County or make statements in the name of Ector County or as a representative of Ector County or with some implied Ector County authority.
  - 3) Employees may not use their County e-mail account or password in conjunction with personal social media.
  - 4) Personal or business venture social media account names shall not be tied to the County. For example, [EctorCountyDeputy@yahoo.com](mailto:EctorCountyDeputy@yahoo.com) or [EctorCountyCarWash@Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/EctorCountyCarWash).
  - 5) County resources and employee's official position shall not be used for personal profit or business interests. For example, a County maintenance worker may not use his position to promote a private plumber business.